



Practical Ideas for *Dietary Guidelines* Implementation

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Moving Ahead of the Curve: Meeting Student Energy Needs

Change is on the horizon! Did you know that the USDA is currently revising nutrition standards for school meals to better align with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans? In order to better prepare child nutrition professionals for these upcoming changes, the Illinois Nutrition Education & Training Program is proud to announce *Illinois School Meals Step up to the Plate*, a new USDA Team Nutrition Training grant initiative. This new initiative includes a series of articles in *The Outlook* on practical application of dietary guidelines principles in school meals.

This is article is the first of the series focusing on meeting student energy needs. Analysis of the 2003-2004 School Meals Initiative data from 581 Illinois schools indicated that ten percent of schools reviewed do not provide enough calories in reimbursable meals. At other times, excess calories may be provided when portion control is not employed.

Sufficient calories provide students with the energy needed to fuel their bodies for physical activity, growth and learning. Here are some proven strategies to make sure your menus meet student calorie needs.

- **Analyze and evaluate your current menus against USDA National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program nutrient standards.** Download a free USDA Team Nutrition Resource entitled *Nutrient Analysis Protocols: How to Analyze Menus for USDA's School Meals Programs* at www.fns.usda.gov/tn/resources/nutrientanalysis.html.
- **Use standardized recipes** to assure that each time a food is served it contributes the desired number of calories to student meals. Access standardized USDA Recipes for Schools at http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/usda_recipes.html.
- **Use age-appropriate portion sizes and meal patterns** to assure you are meeting the energy needs of each age group of students your serve. Download USDA Team Nutrition's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*, a free resource to review portion sizes and meal patterns for foods used within reimbursable meals. <http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/foodbuyingguide.html>
- **Learn what other schools are doing to meet student energy needs.** Join *Mealtalk* at <http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/>, an email discussion group designed to provide a forum for child nutrition professionals to communicate about innovative and practical solutions for common, day-to-day challenges.

Keep current on School Meal Initiative standards at www.isbe.net/nutrition. Learn more about the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans at www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/.

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Meeting Student Nutrient Needs on the Forefront of Change

The USDA is currently improving nutrient standards for the School Meals Initiative (SMI) to better align with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. This article is the second in the series from the new *Step Up Illinois School Meals* initiative, focusing on meeting student nutrient needs in an effort to better prepare school staff for the upcoming revisions. Analysis of the 2003-2004 School Meals Initiative data from 581 Illinois schools indicated that three percent of schools were not providing enough vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium or iron in their reimbursable meals. Adequate nutrients play a key role in student wellness, growth and learning.

Check out these key foods rich in the following nutrients:

- **Calcium** -- Low fat or nonfat milk, cheese and yogurt
- **Vitamin A** -- Broccoli, cantaloupe, carrots, greens, romaine lettuce, spinach and sweet potatoes
- **Vitamin C** -- Fresh oranges, kiwi and peppers, fresh or frozen strawberries and peaches
- **Iron** -- Beans, lean beef, ready to eat cereals and spinach

Here are some great, practical strategies for improving the nutrient content of your school meals:

- **Bone up on calcium** by offering a yogurt parfait bar at breakfast. Check out www.midwestdairy.com/pages/index.cfm?TREE_ID=519 for a yogurt bar success story and an instruction sheet for setting up the bar at your school.
- **Bring your “A game” to the cafeteria.** Add dark green or deep yellow vegetables like romaine lettuce, spinach or shredded carrots to boost the vitamin A content of your salads.
- **Get fresh and colorful with** vitamin C-rich fresh fruits from the Department of Defense (DOD) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. Cut kiwis in half and serve. Kids love scooping out the flesh with a spoon. Also try serving fresh strawberries when in season with a low fat yogurt dip.
- **Boost the iron in school meals by adding beans.** Try hummus dip with fresh vegetables. Hummus is a middle eastern dip that is growing in popularity made with garbanzo beans. Check out the USDA recipe at www.nfsmi.org/Information/school_recipes/E-24.pdf. Also, try adding beans to your burritos, chili, quesadillas and soups.

When introducing new items like hummus dip or kiwi to students, remember that kids are more likely to try a new food if they know something about it first and have a positive opportunity to taste it. This is a great reason to coordinate your efforts with classroom teachers. The hummus dip would enhance lessons on the Middle East and Kiwi originates from New Zealand.

For an additional list of foods rich in vitamin A, vitamin C and iron, check out the Food and Nutrient Guidance resource at www.fns.usda.gov/tn/HealthierUS/index.html.

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Preparing for Change: Reducing Fat Content in School Meals

Did you know that a recent national study of school lunch programs (*SNDA III) concluded that less than one-third of public schools offer and serve reimbursable lunches that met the USDA standards for total fat? Exceeding fat recommendations for school meals may contribute to higher than recommended calorie intake for children. Dietary intake that exceeds recommended calories and fat can contribute to childhood overweight and other related health issues like heart disease and diabetes.

Here are seven great ways to reduce fat content to meet USDA standards:

- Offer only low-fat (1%) and non-fat (skim) milk and add additional flavors to your offering. Make the transition successful with these flavored milk promotion ideas from the Midwest Dairy Council -- www.midwestdairy.com/files/PDF/NewFlavorsPromotionsIdeahandout.pdf.
- Remove deep-fat fryers from your kitchen and bake your potato products.
- Serve steamed vegetables with butter flavored seasoning or lemon/garlic seasoning instead of utilizing butter or margarine.
- Offer only low-fat or fat-free salad dressing for salads, salad bars and dipping vegetables.
- Increase the bean content and decrease the meat within recipes that include both items. In addition, consider increasing your vegetarian entrée offerings. Try this great, meatless USDA school meal recipe for Bean Burritos at www.nfsmi.org/Information/school_recipes/D-12A.pdf.
- Add textured soy protein in place of ground meat in your recipes. For soy recipes, check out *Soy on the Menu: Recipes for Foodservice* by the Illinois Center for Soy Foods at www.soyfoodsillinois.uiuc.edu/pubs.html.
- Utilize unsweetened applesauce to replace half of the oil in muffins and prune puree to replace half of the oil in brownies.

The USDA has contracted with the Institute of Medicine to create recommendations for updating school meal patterns and nutrition requirements for the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. The anticipated changes will ensure that Child Nutrition Programs better align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

In an effort to help school nutrition staff plan, prepare and promote school meals that demonstrate these principals, the Illinois Nutrition Education and Training (NET) Program has developed the *Step Up Illinois School Meals* website. For more information on the *Step Up Illinois School Meals* initiative and ideas for incorporating the Dietary Guidelines into your school meal program, please visit www.kidseatwell.org/stepup.html.

*Third School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study;
www.fns.usda.gov/OANE/menu/SNDAlII/SNDAlII.htm

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Moving Ahead of the Curve: Increasing Fiber in Student Meals

Did you know that a recent national study* of school lunch programs concluded that fiber, based upon a menu survey and 24-hour recalls, was proportionately one of the two nutrients least consumed by students in the National School Lunch Program? The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans also identifies fiber as a nutrient of concern for children as most consume far less than what is recommended. People who consume diets with a variety of fiber-rich foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes tend to consume more vitamins and minerals and may have a lower risk of heart disease.

Here are some great tips for increasing the fiber content in your school meals:

- Serve more legumes (dried beans and peas), including kidney beans and black beans, on your menus. Check out great USDA recipes for marinated black bean salad, vegetable quesadillas and vegetable chili at www.olemiss.edu/depts/nfsmi/Information/school_recipes/all_alpha.pdf
- Offer grab and go fresh fruit like pears, bananas, oranges and apples to students
- Increase the color and flavor of your fruit salad by adding some seasonal fresh or frozen berries like raspberries, blueberries or strawberries
- Serve more fiber rich vegetables like peas, broccoli, cooked greens and corn
- Add mashed red-skinned potatoes with the skins on to your current mashed potato recipe
- Substitute whole wheat flour for 25 percent to 50 percent of the flour in your recipes. Increase the use of whole wheat flour gradually, checking product quality and student acceptability with each increase.
- Offer bread products with a whole grain listed as the first ingredient on the ingredient label including soft pretzels, wraps, sandwich buns and cold cereals. For more information on whole grain products, check out the USDA fact sheet highlighting whole grains for healthier school meals at www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/DGfactsheet_grains.pdf
- Replace white rice with whole grain brown rice
- Include oatmeal with raisins on your breakfast menu

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*Third School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study;
www.fns.usda.gov/OANE/menu/SNDAI/II/SNDAI/II.htm
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Preparing for Change: Decreasing Sodium in School Meals

Did you know that the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) recommends that sodium consumption be limited to 2,300 milligrams (mg) or approximately one teaspoon of salt per day? According to the Guidelines, more than half of Americans consume too much sodium. In addition, 75 percent of the sodium in foods that Americans consume comes from manufacturer processing. To meet the 2005 DGAs, school lunches should not exceed 767 mg of sodium while a school breakfast should generally not exceed 575 mg of sodium on average. USDA Food and Nutrition Service recommends that sodium be reduced incrementally in Child Nutrition Programs, with a stepped plan for meeting the DGA recommendations.

Here are some great tips to start decreasing the sodium in your school meals:

- Consider serving more entrees prepared from scratch in place of preprepared entrees. Start out with one scratch meal weekly for breakfast and/or lunch and increase the offering as feasible. Check out recipe links at KidsEatWell.org/MealPlanning.html/.
- Serve more fresh meat, poultry and fish products versus breaded and processed meat products on your lunch menus.
- Use fewer prepared, breaded or cured meat products for breakfast like bacon or sausage.
- When possible, offer fresh and frozen vegetables in place of canned.
- When choosing canned items, read the Nutrition Facts labels and choose the item lowest in sodium. Drain the liquid from the can and rinse foods such as vegetables and beans with cold water prior to preparation.
- Provide smaller or fewer portions of sauces, gravies, dressings and condiments which tend to be high in sodium.
- Experiment with sodium-free spices to season foods. Try a combination of garlic powder, onion powder and pepper to season vegetables.
- For additional suggestions on lowering the sodium in your school meals, check out a gradual plan for reducing sodium in the *Step Up Plan* at KidsEatWell.org/flyers/StepUpPlan.pdf/.

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Trimming the Fat: One More Step Toward Healthy School Meals

According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005 “most Americans need to decrease their intakes of saturated fat and trans fats, and many need to decrease their dietary intake of cholesterol”. The reason for concern, is that evidence shows that saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol increase risk for heart disease. How do you feel your school is doing in meeting the USDA saturated fat standard or the Dietary Guidelines for trans fat and cholesterol?

While progress has been made in reducing the saturated fat content of school meals, a 2004-2005 national survey found that less than two out of three schools met the saturated fat standard. Pizza products, salad plates/salad bars, hamburgers and cheeseburgers, 2% milk and condiments/spreads were the top sources of saturated fat in school meals. Knowing where most of the saturated fat is coming from will allow you to be particularly vigilant in comparing the saturated fat content of these products and in serving less of foods and beverages high in saturated fat.

What about cholesterol and trans fats? Nearly all schools serve lunches consistent with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for cholesterol. Data on trans fats in school meals is not included in the national survey*, but USDA recommends that child nutrition staff take steps to offer foods with no trans fats. According to the Guidelines, “processed foods and oils provide approximately 80 percent of trans fats in the diet”.

Here are some excellent ways to ensure school meals contain less saturated fat, cholesterol and trans fats:

- Serve only 1% or nonfat milk and milk products.
- Read and compare Nutrition Facts labels. Choose foods lower in saturated fat, cholesterol and trans fats.
- Revise your purchase specifications to buy products with less fat, saturated fat, cholesterol and trans fats.
- Serve fewer high-fat breakfast meat products like sausage and bacon.
- Serve more lean meat, poultry and fish products versus breaded and processed meat products.
- Drain cooked meat.
- Use low-fat cheese in cooking. When purchasing prepared cheese sauces or mixes, choose those lowest in fat and saturated fat.
- Use reduced-fat or fat-free salad dressing for salad bars, prepared salads and raw vegetables for dipping.

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- Incorporate more legumes (dried beans and peas) into your lunch entrée offerings. For recipes like Baja Bean Tacos or Bean Burritos, visit the USDA Recipe Finder at <http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/schoolmeals/Recipes/recipefinder.php> or visit the new Beans section on the USDA Healthy Meals Resource System at: http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=14&tax_level=1/.
- Use pan sprays instead of fat to coat pans and try butter-flavored cooking sprays or seasoning instead of butter for flavor.
- Use fats that contain less saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol in food preparation like vegetable oils in place of solid shortening, margarine and butter.
- Chill soups and remove the excess fat layer that settles at the top.
- Decrease or eliminate the use of higher-fat baked goods.

Taking these steps now, will ensure that your child nutrition program is well positioned to meet anticipated new recommendations for school meals. For more information on planning meals that reflect Dietary Guidelines principles visit www.kidseatwell.org/stepup.html.

*Third School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study

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Prepare School Nutrition Staff for Change

The *Step Up Illinois School Meals* initiative, funded by a USDA Team Nutrition Training Grant project, has assisted school nutrition staff with planning, preparing and promoting school meals that demonstrate the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and *MyPyramid* principles. This timely initiative will continue to help school nutrition staff be proactive in preparing for the updated USDA school meal patterns and nutrition requirements for the School Breakfast and Lunch Programs, to be recommended by the Institute of Medicine as early as Fall 2009.

The Illinois Nutrition Education and Training Program, in partnership with the Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois School Nutrition Association and Illinois Action for Healthy Kids has implemented a statewide awareness campaign and developed a website focused on improving the nutritional quality of school meals. Highlights of the website include:

- *A Step Up Plan* – a menu planning tool that helps school nutrition staff gradually implement the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPyramid principles as well as the USDA HealthierUS School Challenge criteria for school menus.
- *Practical Ideas for Dietary Guidelines Implementation* – a series of six articles that provide tips and resources for implementation of a variety of lean protein sources; more whole grains; more fruits and vegetables; a variety of low fat and fat free calcium-rich foods, and foods with less fat, saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium; and minimal *trans* fatty acids.
- *Illinois School Nutrition Success Stories* – a sneak peek at Illinois schools that have successfully implemented the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and *MyPyramid* principles within school meals.

Still to come is an online course being developed by the National Food Service Management Institute. Check the Illinois NET website at KidsEatWell.org for information on a launch date and how you may qualify for a stipend for completing the free training program.

For more information on the *Step Up Illinois School Meals* initiative and website, please visit www.KidsEatWell.org under *Healthy Schools* and *School Meals*.

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